

Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



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Santa Cruz Mission

State Historic Park

144 School Street

Santa Cruz, California 95060

(831) 425-5849

*Today the complex
of buildings standing
on the site of the
Santa Cruz Mission
is a testament to the
strength of the early
missionaries and the
hard work of the original
Indian inhabitants.*



Nestled against the coastal hills on the northern shore of picturesque Monterey Bay,

Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park stands in memory of the twelfth California mission. Despite the tenacity of the early Franciscan missionaries to make the mission system successful, Santa Cruz Mission is evidence of the difficulties the missions faced in California.

Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park is located at 144 School Street near downtown Santa Cruz. Summers in Santa Cruz can be warm with occasional fog, while the winters are cool with some rain. The weather can be changeable so layered clothing is recommended.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

This land of abundance was home to the Ohlone Indians. Originally living in small groups, neighbors often shared a similar language. The Ohlone lived in domed structures thatched with tule reeds. Groups moved seasonally to prime locations within their territories to fish, hunt or collect plants. They ate processed acorns, seeds, berries and roots, supplemented with meat from large and small game animals, waterfowl and sea life. The Ohlone also managed the grasslands, using fire to encourage fresh plant growth to attract animals like deer and rabbits. Skilled artisans, they created twined baskets, many decorated with abalone pendants, quail plumes and woodpecker feathers. They often traded mussels, abalone shells and salt in exchange for obsidian and other items with the Yokuts, who lived across

the coastal mountains in the San Joaquin Valley. Today's descendants of the Ohlone are preserving their heritage through education.

Spanish Settlers

Spanish missionaries learned of the coastal land surrounding Monterey Bay from early explorers. Gaspar de Portolá, in his quest to find the famed Monterey Bay, passed along the northern shore of Monterey Bay in October 1769.

Misión la Exaltacion de la Santa Cruz became the twelfth of 21 missions established in Alta California. Founded on August 28, 1791, by Father Fermín Lasuén, the mission was first built near the mouth of the San Lorenzo River. The mission flooded the first winter, and Father Lasuén had to relocate to higher ground. The new location had a commanding view of the surrounding area, good climate, fertile soil and, due to nearby Mission San José, native people familiar with Christianity. Construction began

on the mission complex in 1793. The church and mission quadrangle, complete with gristmill, two-story granary and workshops, were completed in 1795.

The mission's decline began in 1796 when Alta California Governor Diego Borica established the pueblo, Branciforte, across the river. Although Spanish law forbade the establishment of a pueblo within a league of a mission, Borica expected Santa Cruz Mission to support the pueblo. Unfortunately, the first pueblo colonists were a mixed group, including criminals sent from San Blas in Baja California and former Spanish soldiers. They not only encroached on mission lands and livestock pastures, but also abused the mission people, causing 200 Indians to flee the area within two years of the pueblo's establishment. As the local native population declined, the padres looked to the nearby



*Painting of Santa Cruz Mission by Edward Deakin
Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History*

Yokuts in the San Joaquin Valley as an alternate source of converts, later resorting to recruitment by force.

Another blow to the weakened Santa Cruz Mission occurred in 1818 when Argentine pirate Hippolyte Bouchard—known for plundering California’s missions and communities—was reported off the Monterey coast. Governor Borica ordered Father Ramon Olbés to flee with the remaining Indians to Mission Santa Clara. When recruited to carry out the governor’s orders to save Santa Cruz Mission’s possessions, Branciforte residents stole or destroyed its valuables instead. Although Bouchard never attacked, the actions of the Branciforte residents severely damaged Santa Cruz Mission, leaving it struggling to stay in operation.

Santa Cruz Mission was among the first of the California missions to be secularized in 1834. There was little of value offered to the Indians. Time and the elements quickly brought about the mission’s

collapse. An 1840 earthquake destroyed the mission bell tower, and a second quake on January 9, 1857, toppled the front wall of the church and crumbled many of the remaining buildings.

Although Mission Santa Cruz no longer existed, its influence on the surrounding community remained. In 1845 Branciforte and the settlements on former mission lands assumed the permanent name of Santa Cruz. A wooden church was built near the collapsed mission buildings and dedicated on July 4, 1858, to serve the Santa Cruz community. In 1891 the Holy Cross Church, a brick structure, replaced the original mission church.

Today a complex of buildings stands on the site of the original Santa Cruz Mission, including a half-scale replica of the original church that contains some surviving mission relics.

The only remaining original mission building is the adobe that the Indian families built and lived in while they worked at the mission. Its seven rooms (out of an original 17) house a museum that shows the changes that occurred in the native people’s lives when they came to the mission.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- The buildings feature slightly narrow historic doors and raised thresholds but are generally accessible.
- The park visitor center and bookstore is accessible.
- Accessible parking and restrooms are located near the picnic area.
- The picnic area features van parking spaces and an accessible table.



Volunteers demonstrate activities and lead tours.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Operating hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday through Sunday.
- Living history demonstrations are often scheduled on weekends.
- Restrooms are located near the picnic area.
- School programs are available. For reservations call (831) 425-5849.
- Free school report information is available; please inquire.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, 5 miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 9, (831) 335-4598
- Natural Bridges State Beach, in Santa Cruz on West Cliff Drive, (831) 423-4609
- New Brighton State Beach, 4 miles south of Santa Cruz on Highway 1, (831) 464-6329
- Seacliff State Beach, 5-1/2 miles south of Santa Cruz on Highway 1, (831) 685-6500
- Wilder Ranch State Park, 2 miles north of Santa Cruz, (831) 423-9703

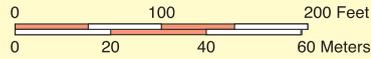


Mission yard with the modern-day chapel in the background

Santa Cruz Mission

State Historic Park

This park is supported in part by a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:
Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
 144 School Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 (831) 429-1840



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Holy Cross Church
 Site of Original Church

High Street

Santa Cruz Mission Plaza

Santa Cruz Mission Chapel and Reliquary
 (Modern half-scale Replica)

Holy Cross School

Park Entrance

Visitor Center & Bookstore

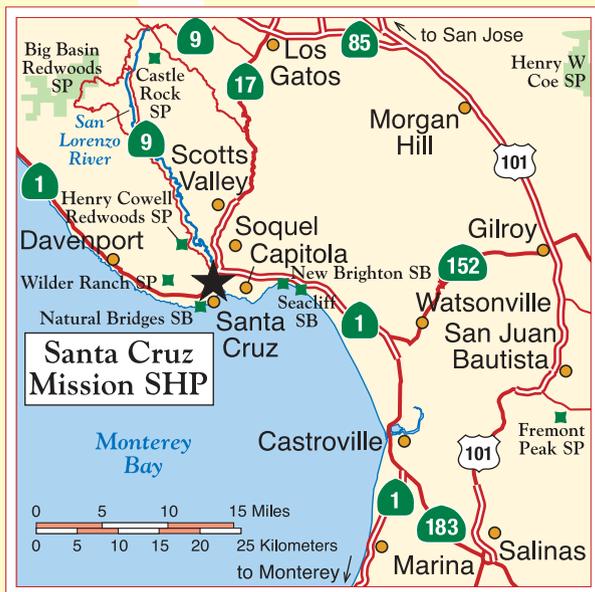
Park Office
 (Business Only)

Mission Adobe

Patio/Picnic Area

Legend

- Road
- State Park
- Park Building
- Non-Park Building
- One Way Street
- Accessible Feature
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms



Highway 1

Sylvan Street

High Street

Emmet Street

School Street

Adobe Street

Mission Street

Green Street

Mission Street

Pacific Avenue

Chestnut Street

Center Street